

Problems in Presidential Selection

Study Leader: Robert DiClerico

Mondays, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

4 weeks beginning Sept. 23

AIL Classroom, Lethbridge Lodge, Colby-Sawyer College

Maximum number of participants: 35

Close observers of our politics argue there is much that should concern us about how we choose our presidents. This course will focus on four of those concerns.

The first is money, the fuel that drives elections. We shall consider its role in determining access and outcomes, why attempts to regulate it have failed and what we should do to fix it.

The second is how we choose our choices, a process long regarded as woefully inadequate. Apropos of this point, in 2016, the parties chose two nominees whose favorability ratings were the lowest ever recorded, and in 2024, two with the second lowest. Can't we do better than this?

The third is voter turnout. For some, the number of abstainers is deeply disturbing as well as an embarrassment. They want to get far more people to the polls and propose several ways to do it. The other camp says never mind trying to rouse the reluctant and focus instead on maintaining the integrity of the voting process. We shall visit both camps.

For the fourth time in our history, the selection process has given us a president with fewer votes than his opponent. These misfirings are courtesy of the Electoral College, our final topic. The critics say get rid of it, while eminences such as Patrick Moynihan warn us away from a "transformation so radical and ominous." Who's right?

Two or three articles will be assigned for each session, and the format will focus heavily on discussion with some lecturing to lay the groundwork.



Robert DiClerico

After graduating from Hamilton College, Robert DiClerico went on to earn a PhD in American politics from Indiana University. Joining the faculty at West Virginia University in 1972, he remained there except for visiting professorships at the University of Houston and University of Exeter (England). During his career at WVU, he served as the Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of Political Science, as well as the campus representative for the Rhodes and Truman Scholarship Foundations. At the time of his retirement in 2016, over 30,000 students had passed through his courses on American government, the presidency, parties and elections.

His books on these subjects include *Few Are Chosen*, *The American President*, *Choosing Our Choices* and *The Contemporary Presidency*. A native of Nahant, Massachusetts, he spent parts of many summers in New Hampshire as a youth and decided to make it his permanent home, moving here in June of 2017.